

**Listen for RARS
Nets, hosted on
the 146.775+
Repeater (88.5
PL)**

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Awards Dinner**

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upcoming 19th annual
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From the Secretary:

Pursuant to the Raleigh Amateur Radio Society Bylaws, the Secretary maintains the official record of the club in the form of meeting minutes. In the past, the minutes have been published in the Exciter. Because of a Board decision, the minutes will no longer be published as they have, but as always, they are available for inspection at any time by any Club member. Call the Secretary to set an appointment.

In addition, the minutes are available via e-mail. If you would like to be on the e-mail distribution list for the minutes of either the General Membership meetings, or the Board meetings (or both), email me at jwittich@pagesz.net. Minutes are usually available within 24 hours after the meeting.

**Please keep Lynn
Pitegoff, KO4QH,
RARS Education
Director, in your
thoughts as she
recovers from a
recent stroke.**

THE RALEIGH AMATEUR RADIO SOCIETY

Exciter



PROMOTING WORLDWIDE FRIENDSHIP

No. 345

February 1999

<http://rars.org>

FCC Comes A Callin' In The Carolinas

ARRL Letter

FCC engineering and legal staff conducted unannounced Amateur Radio station inspections January 21 and 22 in North and South Carolina, reports FCC amateur enforcement honcho Riley Hollingsworth, K4ZDH.

"Commission personnel inspected the stations of John A. Abernethy, K4OKA, an Extra Class licensee in Hickory, North Carolina, and Richard Whiten,

WB2OTK, a General Class licensee in Easley, South Carolina," Hollingsworth said.

In both visits, FCC officials were accompanied by local law enforcement personnel. Hollingsworth said both amateurs cooperated with the inspections, which lasted approximately two hours apiece. FCC officials said that both operators "were the subjects of many complaints about their operations on

the 75 and 20 meter Amateur bands." The officials said the results of the inspections were "under review," and declined further comment.

"We view this matter as extremely serious," he told the ARRL. Hollingsworth called the alleged operation "contrary to the purpose of Amateur Radio" and said that it "endangers the entire Amateur Radio frequency allocation internationally."

RARS Class Begins

March 1st

by Gary, KN4AQ

The winter session of the RARS class will begin March 1st, and will run on the usual Monday/Thursday schedule for six weeks. This year, Jeff AC4ZO is running the class, while Lynn KO4QH concentrates on other educational activities. Perhaps you know someone who has been procrastinating getting their ham license for years. Now's the time. Have them give Jeff a call at 362-9456.

One of the proposals on the table for license restructuring would give Tech-Plus licensees General Class privileges. I guess I wouldn't wait - I'd get that license now and not miss the boat. But if you do that, you'll probably want to hurry and pass the real General before it changes anyway, just for the personal satisfaction.

I've put a bunch of new information about the class on the RARS web page. Check it out, and pass that URL around. We'll do our part to put some new, high-quality hams on the air.

Tarheel Scanner/ SWL SIG Report

by Kelly, AE4FG

The January meeting of the Scanner/SWL SIG was held on the 19th at the El Rodeo restaurant on Pleasant Valley Road in Raleigh. This was a "show and tell" meeting where several members of the group participated. Presentations included: a large AM broadcast band loop antenna, a GE SuperRadio III with SCA receive capabilities, a Chinese transistor radio, and a restored 1960 Philips AM, FM, shortwave radio. Sixteen people attended!

Weekly Net: The Scanner/Shortwave Listening net has been suspended until the 146.64 repeater is back to normal.

Next Meeting: The February meeting of will be held on the 15th (third Monday) at El Rodeo restaurant as mentioned above. We hope to have a presentation of the Emergency Alert Radio. This is a computer programmed weather radio that uses Specific Area Message Encoder (SAME) data messaging to activate the alarm. You can see this radio at www.EmergencyAlertRadio.com. We will meet upstairs for dinner at 6:30 and the meeting will start at 7:30.

Anyone is welcome to attend and you don't need to be an amateur radio operator to participate.

For more information, e-mail Bob Zeher (ke4jvy@juno.com) or Kelly Mills (ae4fg@hotmail.com), or call Bob at 481-9107.

THE EXCITER

Israel Pattison, N4ZVU
Editor

The EXCITER is published monthly by the Raleigh Amateur Radio Society, and is available to its members at no cost. Letters to the Editor, technical articles, items of interest to the amateur radio community and guest editorials are welcomed.

Articles published in the EXCITER do not necessarily represent the views of or carry the endorsement of the society. Articles are printed at the discretion of the editor. No article will be published unless it is accompanied by the name(s) of the person(s) submitting the article.

All submissions to the EXCITER must be submitted to the Editor by the third Tuesday of each month. Articles may be handwritten, typed, stored in ASCII format, or submitted electronically, and may be received by the Editor or any society officer.

Amateur radio-related items for sale by the members of the society may be advertised without charge for one issue, but may be resubmitted as often as desired. Only non-commercial classified advertising will be printed in this manner.

Commercial advertisers may contact the EXCITER Editor for advertising rates and sizes. All proceeds from commercial advertising are donations to the society. Please do not use amateur radio as a means of transmitting commercial advertising information or material.

Contributions, inquiries, and comments concerning the EXCITER content, advertising, distribution, and policies should be directed to the EXCITER Editor:

Israel J. Pattison, N4ZVU
PO Box 19212
Raleigh, NC 27619
(919) 782-2643
ipattison@mindspring.com



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

by Gary, KN4AQ

One Pill Makes You Larger...

And one pill makes you small. Seems like ham radio has taken the second pill. We're getting smaller. This isn't a news flash. Several factors artificially inflated the ham census for the past few years. Mostly it was the change from 5 year to 10 year license terms, which kept some inactive hams on the books longer than they would have been. Those licenses have started expiring again.

The advent of the no-code Tech created a big increase in the number of hams, but it hasn't been sustained. And I've heard that a lot of people sampled ham radio briefly, then moved on. Assuming we don't get them back, those licenses won't start expiring until 2002. This year, the total number of hams actually shrank a bit from last year.

You can see the results. ARRL membership, local club membership (including RARS), hamfest attendance, are all dropping across the country. The ARRL has been cutting their budget, and services, as a reaction.

Can you hear fewer hams on the bands? Is this a problem? Not too many years ago, ham radio was considered to be thriving, yet it had a lot fewer hams than we have now. Those hams supported what seems to have been a bigger ham industry - many more equipment manufacturers and a greater variety of radios and accessories. I can't explain the economics, but I'm hearing that today's quantity of hams can't support the industry we now have.

I've got a better handle on the politics. Fewer hams may mean a little more elbow room on 20 meters to you, but the people and industries who covet our spectrum will surely use the information to argue that we don't need the space we have. And we won't be able to argue that we need it for growth.

From that perspective alone, we need new hams. And we need some younger ones. At 49, I'm sitting right on the median age for hams. I believe I could have said the same thing 10 years ago. I don't intend to stop getting older, just to keep from

skewing our demographic older yet. But when I was first licensed at 15, it was easy to find other teenage hams on the air. Today it's rare.

The internet generally gets the blame for this state of affairs. It certainly has affected my hamming. I probably spend less time on the air from home, and what time I spend in the shack is more likely to be devoted to the computer. Despite my renewed interest in HF, the new rig has been silent for days, as I've devoted precious "spare time" to working on a webpage... for the RARS class.

The internet is fascinating, and there's always something new. But it doesn't satisfy the interest I've always had in radio. That takes signals, antennas, transmitters and receivers. The voice, code or data arriving out of space... there's still something special about that to me that can't come from a wire. Or somebody else's radio system, for that matter. Deliver the internet to me by wireless network, and it looks the same. I can't tell you when the band is open by placing a call on my cell phone.

Shrinkage of Amateur Radio may be inevitable. I'm not giving up, though. I still have hope that if young people are exposed to a ham radio that's relevant to them, the spark will ignite for them, too. Probably soon, we will be offered some new advances in technology that will reshape the hobby. Something digital, of course. I can't imagine what it will sound like quite yet. I hope it let's me talk from my car on the way home from work.

Travelin' Ham

This winter has seen me on the road a lot. Cyndi and I spent Christmas in Hawaii (yes, I hear your offers of sympathy. It was a tough place to be during the ice storm that hit Raleigh, but somebody had to do it). Hamming was restricted to two-meter FM, since we didn't take any HF gear. Next time, we probably will take HF (and Cyndi says there WILL be a next time).

The "local repeater" just out our back door happened to be on top of a 10,000 foot mountain called Haleakala (Holly-ah-ka-la). Make that "dormant volcano." Haleakala erupts about every 200 years, and the last eruption was 209 years ago. And while you may think of Hawaii as a lush paradise, Haleakala's crater is a vast moonscape - a dustbowl almost devoid of water and vegetation. In fact, large parts of some of the

islands are actually arid, with rain forest restricted to the windward side of the mountains that get all the rain.

Hams could reach that repeater from most of the other islands, even mobile 150 miles away. But Hawaii is an island chain made of many mountains, and they block signals just as well as they provide tall antenna supports. It was easy to be out of range of repeaters on the wrong side of a nearby mountain. The Haleakala repeater was quiet most of the day, and we had no trouble using it as our family communications link.

You may have heard of the famous inter-island link. It's part of Hawaii's RACES operation - a system of repeaters that link all the islands full-time. Unfortunately, the link system was down the week we visited. It came back on the air the last day, as we were in line at the airport for the 10 hour flight from Honolulu to Atlanta.

Big City Blues

On the flight out to Hawaii, we changed planes in Los Angeles, at LAX airport. While waiting for the next flight, I scanned two-meters and 440 with my HT. Here we were, in the nation's second largest metropolis, ringed by mountaintop repeaters, thousands upon thousands of hams in the late afternoon on Christmas eve, and... the band was empty. I heard one or two conversations on distant repeaters. 440 was a bit busier, holding maybe three simultaneous conversations within range of my HT.

That was surprising, but this... this was shocking. Last week, I had a business trip to New York City. I had a few hours to kill before my job was scheduled, and I've never had the opportunity to tourist in Manhattan, so I headed for the Empire State Building. Nice view. I caught a good day - a cold front had swept the air clear, and the visibility was reported at 25 miles.

OK, LA had disappointed, but surely the Big Apple, the largest city in America, would be a hotbed of activity, especially from my perch at over 1000' HAAT (Height Above Average Tourists). I pushed the scan button on my HT. Round and round it went. Zero signals. Well, this was a Monday afternoon, but nothing? Here in Raleigh, the .88 and .27 machines are babbling just about all day long. Kerchunking yielded no results, either. This is PL country, and there

are precious few carrier-operated repeaters.

I thought to myself that maybe my HT was being desensed by high RF from all the transmitters just a few feet above me. But I had programmed a few repeaters with PL, and they all kerchunked just fine. Ground-level listening didn't yield any better results. I only heard a few conversations in all time I listened. Once again, UHF produced slightly better results.

I didn't have much time to prepare ham-wise for this trip, but I did search the ARRL club lists and follow some links for New York club pages, looking for repeater info. There was little to be found on the web. I did find a couple clubs with repeaters listed in Manhattan, but once I got there, I couldn't key them up (even with the listed PL). Check out the repeater list on the RARS web page, and on KD4CPL's Triangle Info site. I wish more areas had resources like that.

OK, Israel, have you filled up the postcard yet? (inside joke)

73, Gary KN4AQ

RARS Officers

President

Gary Pearce, KN4AQ
116 Waterfall Court
Cary, NC 27511
(919) 380-7286
kn4aq@ipass.net

Secretary

Jeff Wittich, AC4ZO
211 Dundalk Way
Cary, NC 27511
(919) 362-9456
jwittich@pagesz.net

Treasurer

David Fix, N4YTO
324 Silverberry Court
Cary, NC 27513
(919) 677-8320
dfix@pagesz.net

March Meeting: Awards Dinner -- RSVP Required

by Gary, KN4AQ

The March RARS meeting will feature our usual Awards presentation. As usual, lots of RARS members have pitched in to lead lots of activities over the past year, and we'll be recognizing them at this dinner.

Do you know someone who you think should be recognized? Please let me know, by e-mail or phone (kn4aq@ipass.net, 380-9944). Remember, this is recognition for RARS and related activity. I want to make sure we don't miss anyone (I'd better get some calls or mail!).

DINNER? Yes - plans aren't final at press time, but we're looking at reviving an old RARS tradition, and having a slightly more formal sit-down dinner at an area restaurant. According to research done by our secretary, Jeff AC4ZO, the Awards Presentation has been going on for 19 years in various forms. But until the 90's, most of them were "off campus" at one of several restaurants.

The reason for doing it that way this year began last spring, as we set the club's annual budget. With higher expenses and less revenue from the hamfest, we had to cut corners. We decided not to fund the Awards night, which for the past few years has been an ice cream social. We'll still fund the awards themselves, just not the food. If we do finalize plans for dinner, RARS will not subsidize the dinner.

We will have final plans to announce at the February meeting, and on our other means of communication (repeater, web page, e-mail list). And since those tools don't reach all the members, we're planning a telephone call-up of all members as well. Want to help? Let me know.

Finally, we'll require an RSVP for everyone planning to attend. I know this makes it tough on many of us last-minute planners, but the restaurant will want a head count in advance. To RSVP, call the RARS Hotline, 387-9836. (That spells out FURY-UFO, for those of you who remember phone numbers by acronym only.)

K4HF 6/30/99
The Littlewood Family
2005 Quail Ridge Road
Raleigh NC 27609-

Amateur Radio -- A National Resource
Raleigh Amateur Radio Society, Inc.
P.O. Box 17124
Raleigh, NC 27619



FEBRUARY 1999 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

1	2 RARS General Mtg. 7:00PM Forest Hills BC	3	4	5	6 Charleston, SC Hamfest	7
8 ARRL School Club Roundup	9 ARRL School Club Roundup	10 ARRL School Club Roundup	11 ARRL School Club Roundup	12 ARRL School Club Roundup	13 YL-OM Contest, Phone	14 YL-OM Contest, Phone
15 Scanner/SWL SIG 6:30PM El Rodeo 481-9107.	16 RARS Board Mtg. 7:30PM Forest Hills BC	17	18	19	20 ARRL Intl DX CW Contest	21 Elkins Hamfest ARRL Intl DX CW Contest
22	23 Crystals Mtg. Call 786-1111 for info.	24	25	26	27 NC QSO Party	28 NC QSO Party
1 RARS Class Begins. 7:00PM Nortel Trng. Ctr	2 RARS General Mtg. 7:30PM Forest Hills BC	3	4	5	6 ARRL Intl DX phone Contest	7 ARRL Intl DX phone Contest